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Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

Working Group of the Parties

Twenty-second meeting
Geneva, 19–21 June 2018
Item 1 of the provisional agenda
Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

Annotated provisional agenda for the twenty-second meeting

To be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, starting at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 19 June 2018*

I. Provisional agenda

General segment

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda.
2. Status of ratification of the Convention and the amendment to the Convention.

* As part of the accreditation procedures for meetings at the United Nations Office at Geneva, delegates are requested to register online **before 25 May 2018** through the following link: https://uncdb.unece.org/app/ext/meeting-registration?id=BYvoxQ. Participants requiring a personal invitation letter for visa purposes should click on the "visa required" option and register for the meeting as early as possible, taking into account the period required to obtain the visa. Participants applying for financial support should register **before 30 April 2018** and submit the completed financial support form to the secretariat by email (public.participation@unece.org) before the same date. On their way to the meeting, delegates should obtain an identification badge at the Pass and Identification Unit of the United Nations Office at Geneva Security and Safety Section, located at the Pregny Gate, 14, Avenue de la Paix (see the map on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe website, http://www.unece.org/meetings/practical.html). In case of difficulty, please contact the Convention secretariat by telephone at +41 22 917 2650.

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3. Substantive issues:

   (a) Thematic session on access to information;

   (b) Public participation in decision-making;

   (c) Access to justice;

   (d) Genetically modified organisms.

4. Procedures and mechanisms facilitating the implementation of the Convention:

   (a) Compliance mechanism;

   (b) Reporting mechanism;

   (c) Capacity-building and awareness-raising.

5. Accession to the Convention by States from outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region and other relevant developments and interlinkages related to the promotion of the Convention and its principles.

6. Implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021, including financial matters.

7. Preparations for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties.

8. Any other business.

Special segment on the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention

9. Opening of the special segment.

10. Aarhus storytelling.

11. Youth, Aarhus and the Sustainable Development Goals.

General segment (continued)

12. Thematic session on the promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums.

13. Adoption of outcomes.

II. Annotations

The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) was adopted in Aarhus, Denmark, on 25 June 1998. In celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention, the twenty-second meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Convention will feature a special segment to celebrate past achievements and to look forward, in particular to consider how to engage with youth in creating a sustainable future. Former and present chairs of different bodies of the Aarhus Convention, representatives of Governments, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders will be invited to share their testimonies. The segment will take place on Wednesday, 20 June.

A networking event will be held during the special segment at lunchtime with the aim of matching countries' capacity-building needs with available expertise in other countries and partner organizations. The event will be held in three breakout groups focusing on different themes based on the capacity-building needs identified. During the event, participants will have the opportunity to move between the various group discussions.

Furthermore, two thematic sessions, on access to information (on 19 June) and on the promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums (on 21 June), will be held to discuss these subjects in greater detail.

General segment

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

Timing: Tuesday, 19 June, 10–10.15 a.m.

The Chair of the Working Group will make an introductory statement. The Working Group will thereafter be invited to adopt the agenda for its twenty-second meeting as set out in the present document.[1]

Documentation

Annotated provisional agenda for the twenty-second meeting (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2018/1)

2. Status of ratification of the Convention and the amendment to the Convention

Timing: Tuesday, 19 June, 10.15–10.30 a.m.

The secretariat will provide the Working Group with an overview of the status of ratification, acceptance, approval and accession with respect to the Aarhus Convention and the amendment to the Convention. Delegations will be invited to report on any recent or anticipated developments concerning ratification, acceptance, approval or accession with respect to these instruments. The Working Group is expected to take note of these developments.

3. Substantive issues

(a) Thematic session on access to information

Timing: Tuesday, 19 June, 10.30 a.m.–1 p.m.

A thematic session on access to information will be organized in the format of an interactive panel discussion followed by a general discussion on the basis of several selected questions. The topics for discussion will include a number of subjects based on: (a) decision VI/1 on promoting effective access to information (see ECE/MP.PP/2017/2/Add.1) adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its sixth session (Budva, Montenegro, 11–13 September 2017); (b) the key outcomes of the work of the Task Force on Access to Information; and (c) issues of a systemic nature addressed through the work of the Compliance Committee. The topics for discussion include: (a) the benefits of providing public access to environmental information and the challenges encountered; (b) the scope of environmental information; (c) the providers of information; (d) exceptions to the provision of information and grounds for refusal; (e) the format of the information to be provided and timeliness; and (f) dissemination of real-time, up-to-date, accurate and functional environmental information in forms and formats meeting the needs of different users. The detailed programme for the thematic session will be made available on the meeting web page in due course.

[1] All documentation for the meeting will be made available on a dedicated web page on the Convention's website http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47188.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2018/4)

(b) Public participation in decision-making

Timing: Tuesday, 19 June, 3–3.30 p.m.

The Working Group of the Parties will be informed about the preparations for the eighth meeting of the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making (Geneva, 8–9 October 2018). Delegations will be invited to contribute additional information on relevant developments in this area. The Working Group is expected to take note of the information provided and may offer further guidance on the planned activities.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2018/4)

(c) Access to justice

Timing: Tuesday, 19 June, 3.30–4 p.m.

The Working Group will be informed about the outcomes of the eleventh meeting of the Task Force on Access to Justice (Geneva, 27–28 February 2018). Delegations will be invited to contribute additional information on relevant developments. The Working Group is expected to take note of the information provided and may offer further guidance on the planned activities.

Documentation

Report of the eleventh meeting of the Task Force on Access to Justice (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2018/3)

Report on the implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2018/4)

(d) Genetically modified organisms

Timing: Tuesday, 19 June, 4–4.30 p.m.

The Working Group will consider relevant developments with regard to genetically modified organisms since the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties. In particular, it will discuss the issue of ratification of the amendment to the Convention providing for public participation in decisions on the deliberate release into the environment and placing on the market of genetically modified organisms. The Working Group is expected to take note of the information provided and may offer further guidance on the planned activities.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2018/4)

4. Procedures and mechanisms facilitating the implementation of the Convention

(a) Compliance mechanism

Timing: Tuesday, 19 June, 4.30–5.15 p.m.

The Working Group will be informed about the outcomes of the recent meetings of the Compliance Committee and other relevant matters since the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties. The Working Group is expected to take note of the information provided.

Documentation

Report of the Compliance Committee on its fifty-seventh meeting (ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2017/6, forthcoming)

Report of the Compliance Committee on its fifty-eighth meeting (ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2017/10, forthcoming)

Report of the Compliance Committee on its fifty-ninth meeting (ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2017/23, forthcoming)

Report of the Compliance Committee on its sixtieth meeting (ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2018/2, forthcoming)

Report on the implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2018/4)

(b) Reporting mechanism

Timing: Tuesday, 19 June, 5.15–5.20 p.m.

The secretariat and delegations will provide information on the status of submission of national implementation reports since the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties. The Working Group is expected to take note of the information.

(c) Capacity-building and awareness-raising

Timing: Tuesday, 19 June, 5.20–6 p.m.

The secretariat and delegations will provide information on capacity-building activities carried out since the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties. The Working Group is expected to take note of the developments and may discuss the future work in this area.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2018/4)

5. Accession to the Convention by States from outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region and other relevant developments and interlinkages related to the promotion of the Convention and its principles

Timing: Wednesday, 20 June, 10–10.40 a.m.

The secretariat and delegations will update the Working Group on efforts to promote the Convention, including in connection with accession to the Convention by States beyond the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, and on other relevant

developments and interlinkages. The Working Group is expected to take note of the information provided and may discuss the future work in this area.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2018/4)

6. Implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021, including financial matters

Timing: Wednesday, 20 June, 10.40–11 a.m.

The Working Group is expected to take note of the reports by the secretariat on the implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 and on contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the Convention's work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021, taking into consideration the discussion under the previous agenda items. Delegations will be encouraged to notify the Working Group of their planned financial contributions.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2018/4)

Report on contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the Convention's work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2018/5)

7. Preparations for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties

Timing: Wednesday, 20 June, 11–11.10 a.m.

The Working Group will consider possible dates for the seventh ordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties and potential proposals by Parties willing to host the seventh session.

8. Any other business

Timing: Wednesday, 20 June, 11.10–11.15 a.m.

Delegates wishing to propose points under this item are requested to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

Special segment on the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention

9. Opening of the special segment

Timing: Wednesday, 20 June, 11.30 a.m.–noon

High-level officials from Parties to the Aarhus Convention and ECE are expected to participate at the opening of the special segment.

10. Aarhus storytelling

Timing: Wednesday, 20 June, noon–1 p.m. and 3.30–4.30 p.m.

During an "Aarhus storytelling" session, the Working Group will hear testimonies by former and present chairs of different bodies of the Aarhus Convention, representatives of Governments, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, followed by a general debate.

11. Youth, Aarhus and the Sustainable Development Goals

Timing: Wednesday, 20 June, 4.30–6 p.m.

A discussion on "Youth, Aarhus and the Sustainable Development Goals" will focus on how young people consider Aarhus (public) rights help them to create a sustainable future. The session will involve youth, Governments and representatives of international and non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders.

General segment (continued)

12. Thematic session on the promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums

Timing: Thursday, 21 June, 9.30 a.m.–12.30 p.m.

A thematic session on the promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums will be organized in the format of panel presentations and round-table discussions. The session will focus primarily on the promotion of public participation in international decision-making on chemicals and waste. Additional topics will include an update on stakeholder engagement at the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and preparations for the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties; the access to information and stakeholder engagement policies of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the United Nations Environment Programme; the high-level political forum on sustainable development and Sustainable Development Goals-related processes; international financial institutions processes; and cross-cutting issues related to international decision-making (e.g., hosting of an international event or identification of the public). The detailed programme for the thematic session will be made available on the meeting web page in due course.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2018/4)

13. Adoption of outcomes

Timing: Thursday, 21 June, 2.30–3.30 p.m.

The Working Group will hear a report on the outcomes of the informal networking session. It will thereafter discuss and adopt the outcomes of its twenty-second meeting.[2]

[2] With a view to ensuring equal opportunities for English, French and Russian-speaking delegations and reducing the amount of paper used for printing of the draft report, the meeting will result in a list

III. Organization of work

Date and time	*Item no.*	*Agenda item*
General segment		
Tuesday, 19 June		
10–10.15 a.m.	1	Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda
10.15–10.30 a.m.	2	Status of ratification of the Convention and the amendment to the Convention
10.30 a.m.–4.30 p.m.	3	Substantive issues
10.30 a.m.–1 p.m.	3 (a)	Thematic session on access to information
1–3 p.m.		****Lunch****
3–3.30 p.m.	3 (b)	Public participation in decision-making
3.30–4 p.m.	3 (c)	Access to justice
4–4.30 p.m.	3 (d)	Genetically modified organisms
4.30–6 p.m.	4	Procedures and mechanisms facilitating the implementation of the Convention
4.30–5.15 p.m.	4 (a)	Compliance mechanism
5.15–5.20 p.m.	4 (b)	Reporting mechanism
5.20–6 p.m.	4 (c)	Capacity-building and awareness-raising
Wednesday, 20 June		
10–10.40 a.m.	5	Accession to the Convention by States from outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region and other relevant developments and interlinkages
10.40–11 a.m.	6	Implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and for 2018-2021, including financial matters
11–11.10 a.m.	7	Preparations for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties
11.10–11.15 a.m.	8	Any other business
11.15–11.30 a.m.		****Coffee break****
Special segment on the Anniversary of the adoption of the Aarhus Convention		
11.30 a.m.–noon	9	Opening of the special segment
noon–1 p.m.	10	Aarhus storytelling

of decisions and outcomes that will be projected on the screen approximately 30–40 minutes before the close of the meeting, and presented by the Chair verbally thereby allowing for interpretation. The list of decisions will be distributed to participants by email after the meeting.

Date and time	*Item no*	*Agenda item*
1–2 p.m.		***Lunch***
2–3.15 p.m.		****Networking event on matching countries needs with the offers for support****
3.30–4.30 p.m.	10	Aarhus storytelling (continued)
4.30–6 p.m.	11	Youth, Aarhus and the Sustainable Development Goals
General segment (continued)		
Thursday, 21 June		
9.30 a.m.–12.30 p.m.	12	Thematic session on the promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums
12.30–2.30 p.m.		***Lunch***
2.30–3.30 p.m.	13	Adoption of outcomes